

Introduction

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

OPEN MEETING LAW History

The Massachusetts “Open Meeting Law” (under MGL 39:23A-C) was enacted in 1975 under Chapter 303 of the Acts of 1975, although its roots date back to 1958. There have been a number of amendments to the OML since 1975, but its general provisions remain the same. The OML is critical to the basic principal of public disclosure. Each “public employee,” whether elected or appointed, paid or not paid, must receive a copy of this law from the Town Clerk upon “qualification” to their position (i.e., at the time they are sworn to their duties).

The purpose of the OML is to promote the public’s understanding of governmental operations by eliminating much of the secrecy that in the past often surrounded deliberations and decisions upon which public policy was based. To accomplish this purpose, the OML requires public discussion of governmental action at a public meeting for which no less than 48-hours’ notice has been given.

Of course, there are also statutory exemptions for meetings which are considered “emergency” in nature, as well as provisions for public bodies to meet in “executive session”; however all such exclusions to the public meeting forum must be in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Law. The Open Meeting Law under MGL 39:23A-C will no longer exist after June 30, 2010, when the provisions of the newly-enacted law will take effect.

Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009 OML Sections Effective July 1, 2010

The “Ethics Reform Bill” which was passed by the Legislature under Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009, includes sections pertaining to the Open Meeting Law which take effect on July 1, 2010. It eliminates in its entirety the previous Open Meeting Law under MGL 39:23A-C and replaces it with the new law under MGL 30A:18-25.

In addition, implementation and enforcement of this new law, formerly under the jurisdiction of the various county District Attorney’s Offices, will now be assumed by the State Attorney General’s Office (under the new Division of Local Government) beginning July 1, 2010.

This revised law will require many changes to the operation of all public bodies, boards and committees. Guidance in the form of *“procedural and substantive regulations that will help to fill in any gaps in the OML and respond to issues that may arise”* are forthcoming from the Attorney General's Office and will be posted once available.

MEETING NOTICES

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
Information	Meeting Notice Information
Meeting Notice	

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Links to Various Documents on AG's Website

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
Index	Overview to all Links on AGO Website
Open Meeting Law	MGL 30:18-25
Regulations	940 CMR 29.00 revised October 1, 2010
Guide	AGO's OML Guide Booklet
Complaint Process	Complaint Process Overview
Complaint Form	File with Local Public Body